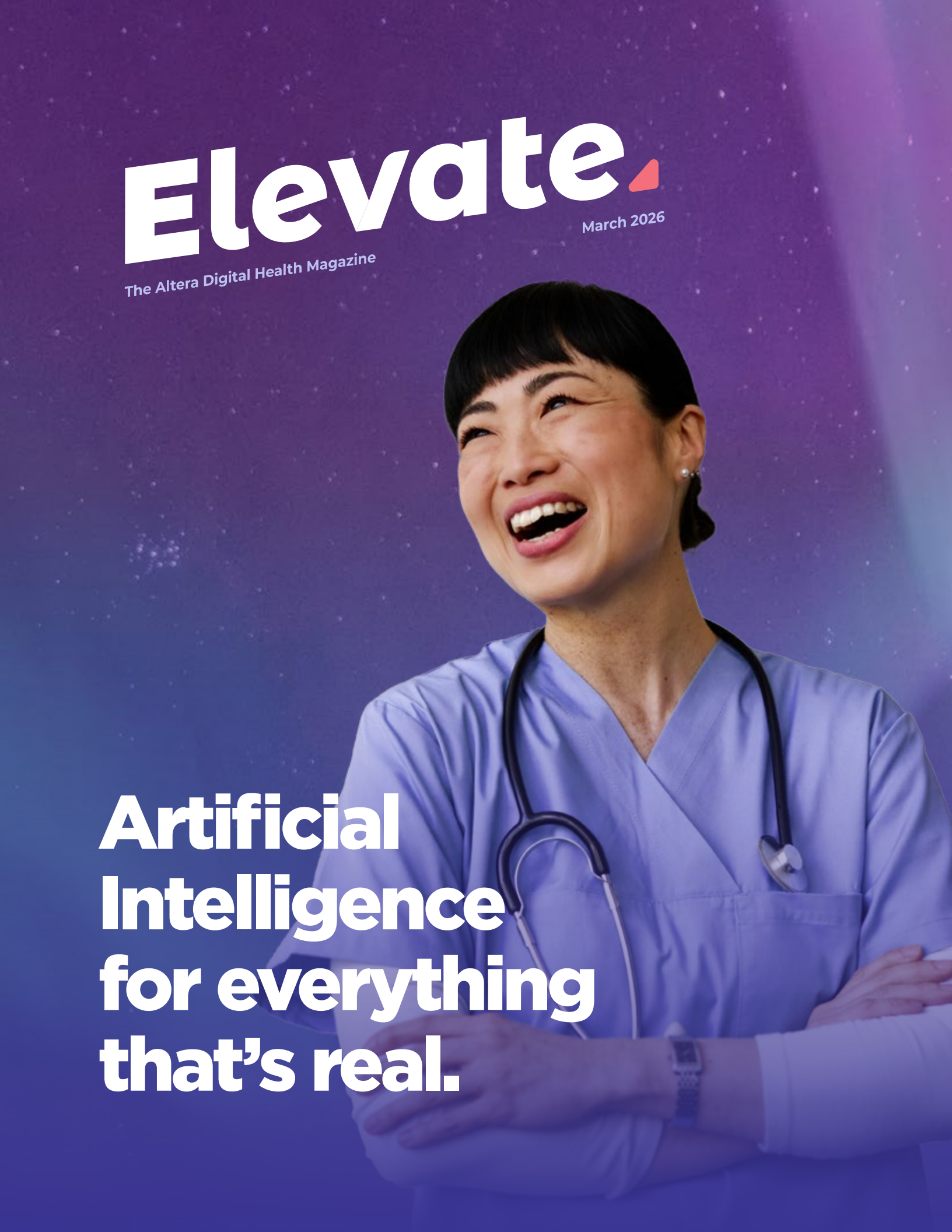
Elevate

The Altera Digital Health Magazine

March 2026



Artificial Intelligence for everything that's real.

SAVE THE DATE

HCTC 2026

Gaylord Rockies | Denver, CO
December 8–10, 2026

HCTC is our user-centered training event that offers Altera clients (and all Harris clients) the opportunity to boost their technical expertise of the solutions they use. It's a chance to meet other clients and share solution best practices that help drive meaningful results.

For clients attending HCTC 2026, they'll experience user-focused content aimed directly at ensuring they are getting the most from their IT investment. It's an opportunity to pick up tips and tricks for improving patient care, boosting productivity and driving financial success.

Learn more about HCTC.

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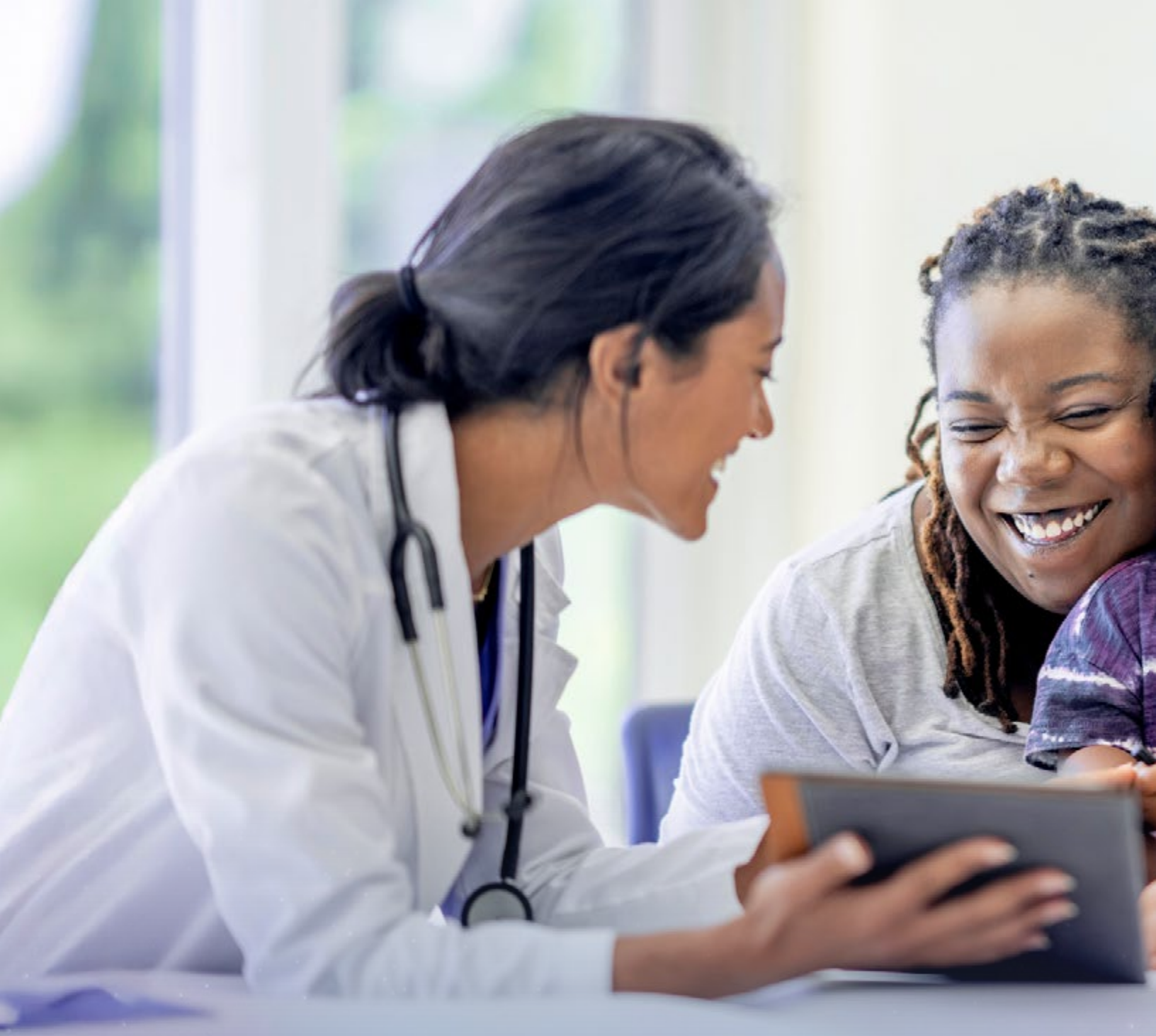
The Altera Digital Health Magazine

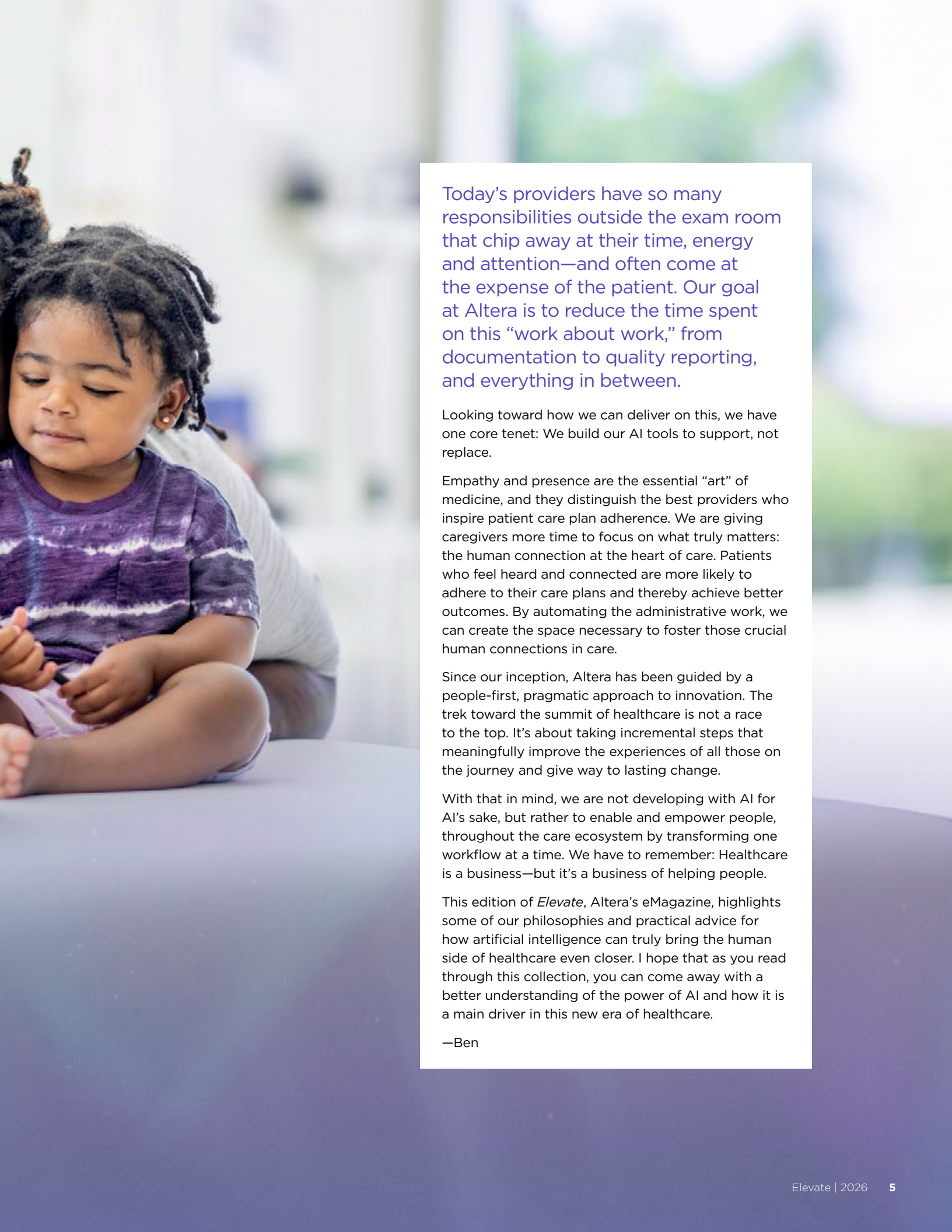
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Driving success with our clients



Bringing the human side of healthcare closer

A letter from Ben Scharfe, Executive Vice President, AI Initiatives



Today's providers have so many responsibilities outside the exam room that chip away at their time, energy and attention—and often come at the expense of the patient. Our goal at Altera is to reduce the time spent on this "work about work," from documentation to quality reporting, and everything in between.

Looking toward how we can deliver on this, we have one core tenet: We build our AI tools to support, not replace.

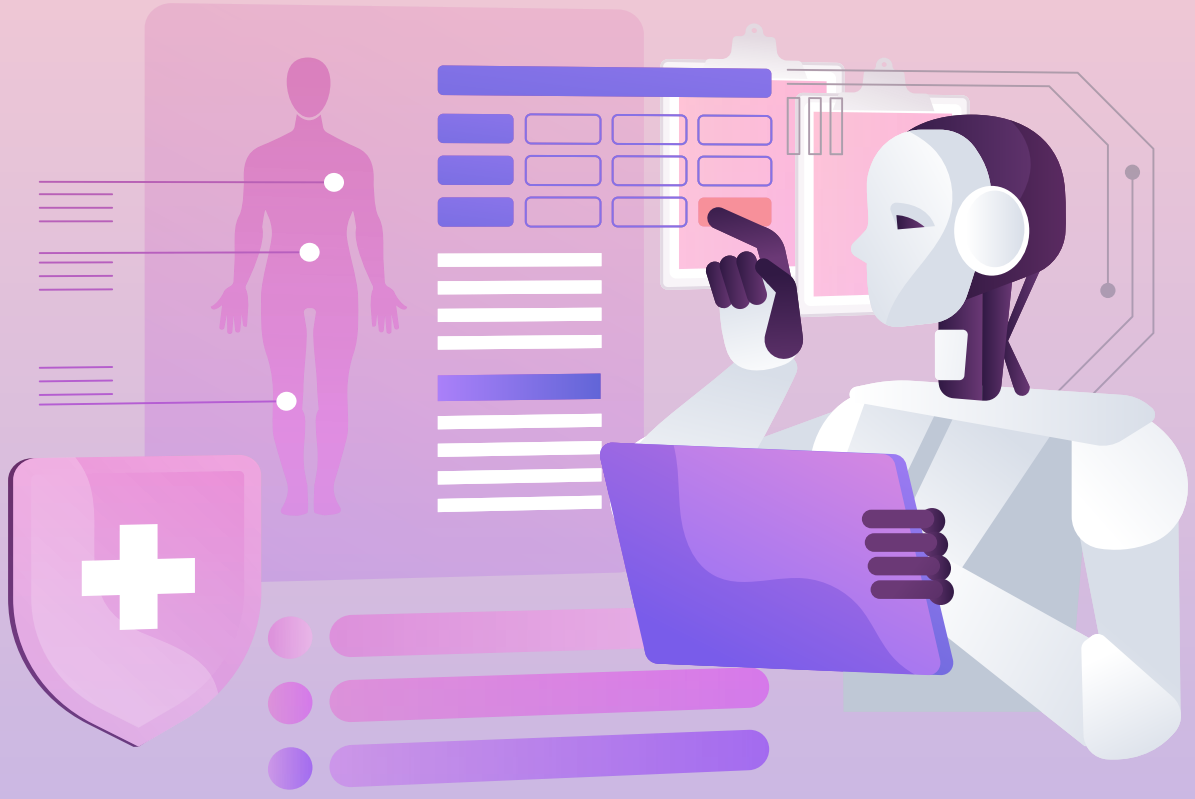
Empathy and presence are the essential "art" of medicine, and they distinguish the best providers who inspire patient care plan adherence. We are giving caregivers more time to focus on what truly matters: the human connection at the heart of care. Patients who feel heard and connected are more likely to adhere to their care plans and thereby achieve better outcomes. By automating the administrative work, we can create the space necessary to foster those crucial human connections in care.

Since our inception, Altera has been guided by a people-first, pragmatic approach to innovation. The trek toward the summit of healthcare is not a race to the top. It's about taking incremental steps that meaningfully improve the experiences of all those on the journey and give way to lasting change.

With that in mind, we are not developing with AI for AI's sake, but rather to enable and empower people, throughout the care ecosystem by transforming one workflow at a time. We have to remember: Healthcare is a business—but it's a business of helping people.

This edition of *Elevate*, Altera's eMagazine, highlights some of our philosophies and practical advice for how artificial intelligence can truly bring the human side of healthcare even closer. I hope that as you read through this collection, you can come away with a better understanding of the power of AI and how it is a main driver in this new era of healthcare.

—Ben



The rise of the virtual medical assistant

By Dr. Jeanne Armstrong, Chief Medical Officer for TouchWorks® EHR

Recent buzz about AI in healthcare has largely highlighted its ability to automate time-consuming, tedious work. There is certainly merit to this pursuit, given that physicians spend about one-third of their working hours in the EHR and on administrative tasks. But AI development is moving at an incredibly rapid pace, and its next evolution in healthcare is closer than you might think.

In my work supporting ambulatory practices, I've seen how even the most capable providers are stretched thin by administrative overhead. The promise of AI isn't just about speed—it's about restoring meaning and connection in the clinical encounter.

One of the most promising developments on the horizon is the rise of virtual medical assistants (VMAs). These AI-powered tools will not just save providers' time. They will shift health IT systems from sources of friction to true assets, paving the way to smoother, more impactful patient-provider interactions.

Let's explore what this not-so-distant future looks like.

Lightening the load

Currently, providers often must click through multiple electronic health record (EHR) tabs just to understand a patient's full history. That can take several minutes of manual searching, all of which detract from facetime with the patient.

VMAs integrated with the EHR will change this dynamic entirely. The real benefit goes beyond static chart summarization. It's about answering the exact clinical questions a provider has in the moment like, "Has this patient ever been on a statin, and if so, why was it stopped?" or "Show me any missed follow-up on abnormal mammogram results." These tailored prompts help clinicians cut through chart clutter and surface the insights most relevant to what they're seeing—and deciding—right now. No coding knowledge required.

We're already seeing how AI can help clinicians focus more on direct patient care with ambient listening tools today. Solutions like TouchWorks Note+ generate notes based on clinical encounters that providers can easily review before completion, without all that manual data entry. Integrating VMAs with ambient listening AI will provide a level of assistance my peers back in medical school could only have dreamed of. By "listening" to patient-provider conversations in real time, VMAs will anticipate and take proactive steps to fulfill providers' needs.

For example, if a provider says to the patient, "I'm going to refill your lisinopril today," the VMA would automatically queue up the refill. Or, if the provider begins discussing a patient's hemoglobin levels, the assistant could surface the latest A1C test result without being asked. This is how the EHR will evolve into an intelligent, responsive tool rather than a passive database.

Sticking to standards of care

Because VMAs are incredibly adaptable, they will provide the kind of customization and personalization we take for granted in our personal lives across ecommerce, banking and other consumer-minded industries.

Practices leveraging VMAs could define templates for the most common chronic conditions among their patient populations to surface key metrics any time a provider opens the record of a patient with that condition. With this type of condition-specific review baked in, the provider would get easy visibility into the most relevant datapoints or trends without needing to prompt the system to provide those insights.

Additionally, practices will be able to set their own standards of care for managing conditions, adding initial diagnostic criteria and all the management rules into the VMA's logic. As a result, the VMA would help evaluate whether a patient's current management aligns with the standard of care as defined by the practice. For instance, a practice could set a target A1C threshold for patients with diabetes, prompting the VMA to flag any patients who haven't met the goal or received recommended follow-up—making it easier for clinicians to stay aligned with protocols. Clinical decisions must remain in the hands of trained professionals; AI can enhance judgment, not replace it.

Putting focus where it matters

Virtual medical assistants represent a major leap forward in how AI supports care delivery. They will enable clinicians to spend more time focused on patients and less time wrestling with technology. By removing distractions and anticipating needs, they have the power to make care more efficient, more personalized and ultimately, more human. At Altera, we're embedding these innovations into TouchWorks® EHR to help clinicians spend more time with patients and less time navigating systems.

This article originally appeared in Becker's Hospital Review.

Discover how TouchWorks EHR is enabling practices to provide the experiences and outcomes patients and providers want.

Decisions, decisions: Things to consider when choosing an AI vendor

By David Krecker, Senior Software Architect, Sunrise™

We all know it: AI is seemingly everywhere, in nearly every industry. But when it comes to healthcare, there are important factors for organizations to consider when implementing AI tools. As a healthcare IT vendor, those of us at Altera understand the overwhelming number of choices you're faced with when selecting the right AI vendor.

Here are a few things we keep in mind when exploring AI vendors.

Accuracy and performance

Accuracy is an incredibly important factor to consider when bringing an AI tool into your organization. With AI ambient listening and speech-to-text tools, testing is key. Test cases should iterate through real-world cases like medical transcription and multilingual conversations between patients and providers to ensure consistency and safe accuracy levels. When looking at support for various languages, it's also important to look at region-specific adaptability. Additionally, when integrating large language models (LLMs) with medical data, it's critical to evaluate not just general accuracy, but also the precision of included and

excluded clinical details. Even small omissions or incorrect inferences can have serious consequences in a healthcare setting, so LLMs must be rigorously validated to ensure they include the right context and exclude irrelevant or misleading information.

Cost and pricing

Everything comes with a cost, but with these types of tools, it can certainly be worth it. Transparent and predictable pricing is a major factor for most organizations looking at an AI vendor. Choosing a vendor with a clear cost model will help ensure your organization knows exactly what you're getting for your money. Many of the AI tools have cost structures which are based on usage metrics such as token consumption, time-intervals or payload size. Gathering anticipated usage metrics for your AI workflows will help to achieve accurate estimates of costs which should be communicated to your clients.

Flexibility and integration

AI tools are meant to make jobs easier, right? An AI vendor's tools should be easy to integrate into existing products and infrastructures. Of course, there's always a learning curve, but ultimately AI tools are built to help specific operations run more smoothly. Constant evaluation of AI tools is essential to ensure optimal performance, especially as models and capabilities rapidly evolve. To stay agile, it's equally important to architect solutions in a modular way that allows for easy integration or replacement of AI tools and vendors. This flexibility reduces vendor lock-in and ensures your organization can always leverage the best available technology.

Transparency and visibility

Having full visibility into dashboards and usage reporting tools is essential in tracking and analyzing your overall performance. When integrating a new tool of any kind, it's also important to have full transparency with practices like regulatory, compliance and billing.

From the Sunrise team, we know there are many important things to consider when thinking about integrating AI tools. After all, with AI making massive strides everywhere, we're here each step of the way to support our clients on their journeys to the summit of healthcare and beyond.

Learn more about Altera's AI philosophy.

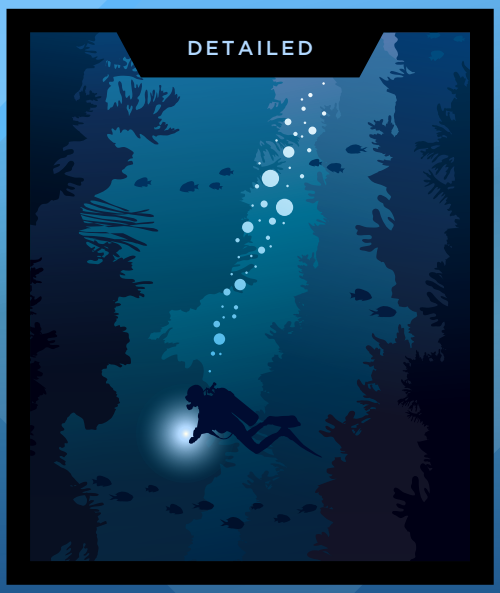
Altera
DIGITAL HEALTH

WHAT KIND OF ALTERA PATHFINDER ARE YOU?

Take this quiz to discover how your strengths are helping your organization and community thrive. Healthcare calls for all types, and when we work together, better outcomes are within reach, for everyone.

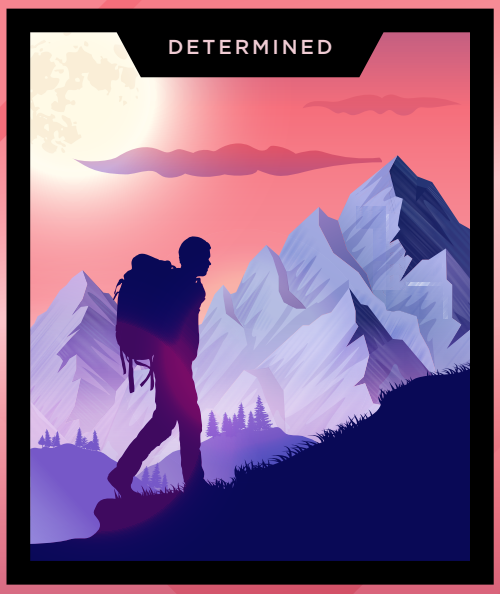
WHAT KIND OF PATHFINDER ARE YOU?

To take the quiz, visit **alterahealth.com/pathfinder**



DEEP-SEA DIVER

SENTINEL

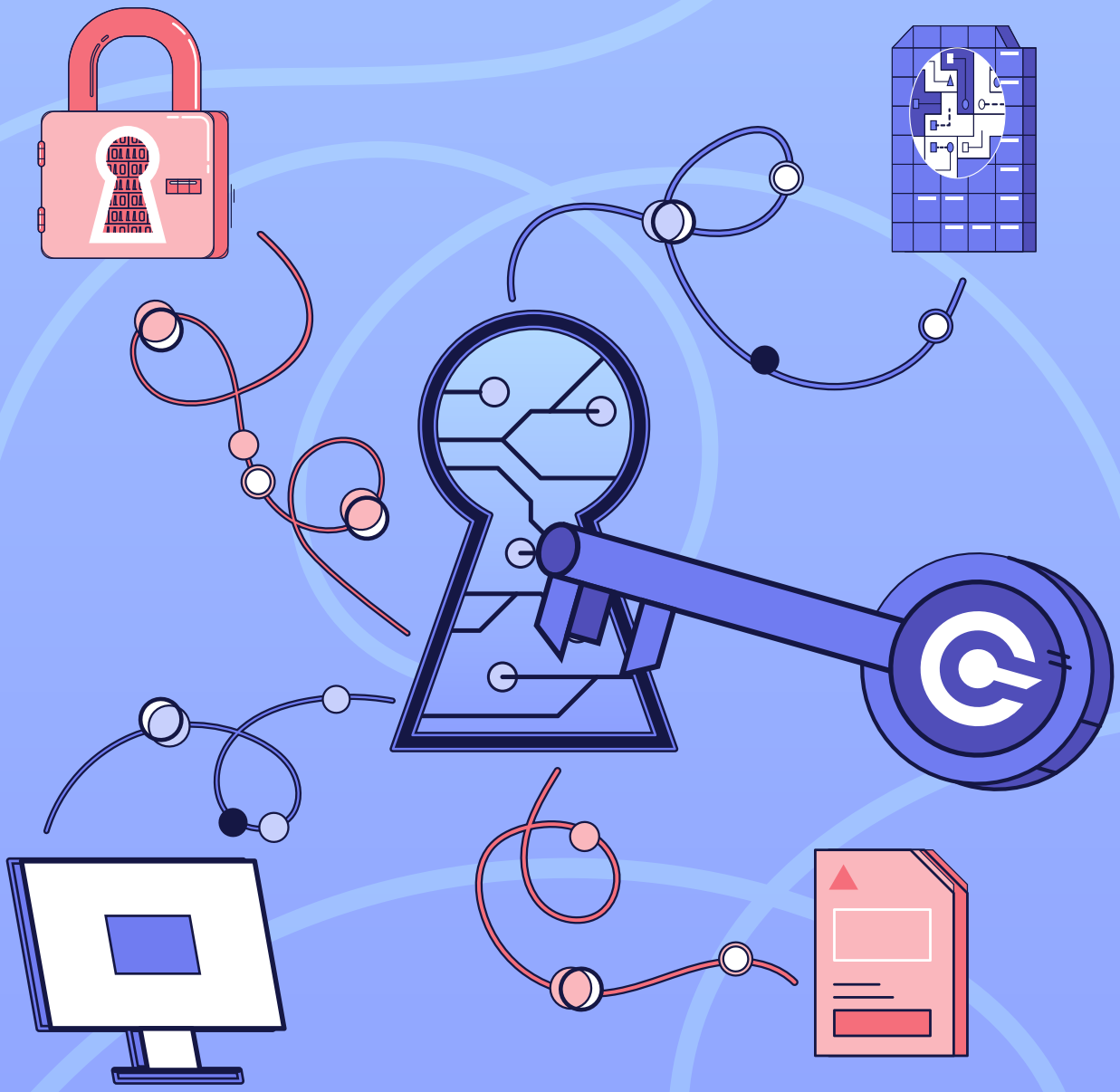


MOUNTAINEER

SPACE VOYAGER

Hackers versus hospitals in the age of AI

By Tim O'Brien, Vice President of Cloud Growth



For years, administrative burdens, tedious tasks and compliance complexities have slowed our industry down and compromised the human elements of healthcare. Now, artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to enable better, faster, more personal care delivery. But, as with any new technology, healthcare organizations should vet potential risks as vigorously as they assess the benefits.

Case in point: The same AI that can identify health patterns and predict claim denials also creates an expanded attack surface for cybercriminals. To protect patients, their data and your systems, organizations must evolve their security and privacy frameworks to keep pace with the shifting threat landscape.

Examining evolving risks

So, what does this new cybersecurity reality look like? Phishing and social engineering campaigns, for instance, are now hyper-personalized. Bad actors are leveraging AI to synthesize stolen protected health information (PHI) with personal and insurance data to create highly convincing and urgent messages that bypass traditional detection methods. These AI-crafted messages often lack the typical red flags, such as grammatical errors, making them more effective.

Ransomware operations have also become more efficient. AI is now used to map hospital networks, identify high-value data assets and execute attacks with unprecedented speed, turning a potential vulnerability into a system-wide breach in minutes.

Agentic AI in particular highlights how well-intentioned technology adoption can quickly become detrimental without proper guardrails in place. These autonomous systems can make decisions and execute complex tasks across multiple platforms on behalf of users. This introduces a new vector for threats, where a single compromised AI model can create vulnerabilities across dozens of interconnected systems like a ripple effect.

Adapting security strategies

Cybersecurity has always been a cat-and-mouse game. Security professionals shore up defenses of their systems, malicious actors test new workaround strategies and the cycle continues. That's why we must operate under the assumption that for every AI tool we leverage to improve healthcare, adversaries will weaponize similar technology to attack it.

Prevention alone is not a sufficient strategy as AI enables greater speed, scale and sophistication of cyberattacks. Organizations must implement active monitoring for rapid detection and containment as well as immutable backups to ensure they can restore critical operations without giving in to ransom demands.

Additionally, traditional security architectures of hospitals were not designed for autonomous systems operating with human-level privileges. To secure this new environment, a "zero trust" framework should be the default standard. This means moving beyond perimeter-based security and compliance checklists. Every request for access, regardless of its origin, must be verified. Similarly, network segmentation can help prevent a single breach from compromising an entire system.

For agentic AI in particular, organizations should enable only the minimum necessary privileges and access. Monitoring, segregation of duties and authentication (i.e., tethering agents to a human user) can also help minimize the damage a hijacked agent could do.

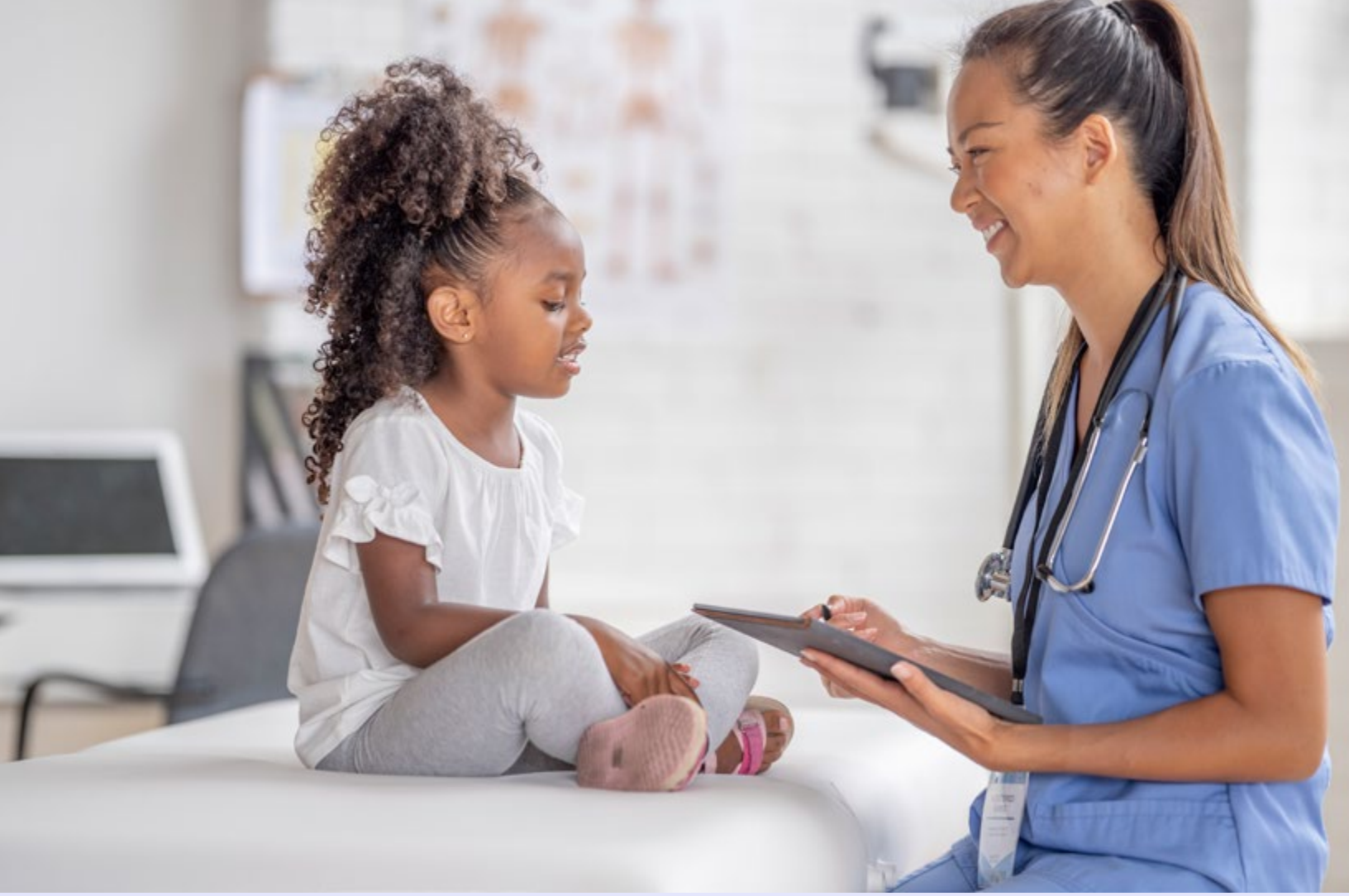
These are the kinds of security controls that healthcare leaders need to prioritize when integrating AI into their systems. The allure of "free" tools should be met with extreme caution as they often come at the hidden cost of surrendering control over your data. Every AI vendor and platform must undergo rigorous vetting, with explicit contractual clarity on data ownership, model governance and override capabilities.

Protecting what matters most

For healthcare organizations, AI's strengths can quickly turn into points of weakness. But with the right balance of innovation and protection, hospitals—and the systems they rely on—can become resilient. Because in healthcare, safety is everything.

This article originally appeared on healthcarebusinesstoday.com.

Learn more about Altera Cloud.



Driving success with our clients

With sights set on growth, Phoenix Children's partnership with Altera Cloud gave hospital leaders the reliable infrastructure and cutting-edge solutions to walk through their expansion and migration with ease—with the right partner by their side. Located in the Southwest Valley, Phoenix Children's new location was up and running within days rather than weeks—with applications ready on day one. With the Altera Cloud solution, Phoenix Children's system availability was not an issue and go-live was an instant success.

Learn more about Phoenix Children's partnership with Altera Cloud in our client success story.

Get to know our

Trailblazers

Leo Benson

Principal Software Architect, Sunrise

Meet our first AI Trailblazer, Leo Benson! Hear Leo's passion for building AI that reduces admin and elevates clinician-patient relationships, and then tell us what stood out to you the most!

What does it take to build AI that actually helps clinicians?

In the first episode of our AI Trailblazer series, we sit down with Leo to explore how AI in healthcare can be designed to reduce admin burden, support clinical workflows and put people first.

real people.
real connections.
real outcomes.
with real heart.

Watch the full episode and meet all of our Altera Trailblazers.

The silent advocate: How AI can alleviate mental health struggles in nurses

By Geoff Nau, Chief Nursing Officer, Paragon®

As frontline caregivers, nurses often bear the weight of high workloads, emotional exhaustion and administrative pressures—all of which contribute to rising levels of burnout and mental fatigue. While healthcare systems have long focused on patient outcomes, a growing body of evidence suggests that the well-being of nurses is equally vital to the delivery of safe, compassionate care. One surprising ally in supporting nurses' mental health is artificial intelligence (AI) integrated into electronic heath records (EHRs). Let's examine some of the ways this technology is helping nurses maintain better mental health.

The depths of administrative burden

Nurses often spend hours each shift on documentation, order entry and chart reviews. This is time that could be spent on patient care or, often as important but sometimes overlooked, self-care. EHRs can automate and streamline many of these routine tasks, especially when integrated with AI. Through natural language processing and predictive text, AI can transcribe clinical notes from voice input, auto-suggest common documentation phrases and even flag incomplete fields before submission. This reduces cognitive load and the sense of being overwhelmed, giving nurses back precious time and mental bandwidth. When this happens, not only is the clinical outlook improved, but we can also see that nurses are in a better position to build meaningful connections with patients while knowing the technical side of care is accounted for. We have to remember that nurses become nurses to help treat patients, not to spend hours typing. Documentation is critical, but it shouldn't be a burdensome weight.

Improved morale through better decision-making

Clinical decision-making can be a major source of stress, especially in high-acuity or understaffed settings. Again, AI algorithms within EHRs can analyze patient data in real time to suggest interventions, highlight potential complications or detect early signs of deterioration. This clinical backup helps nurses feel more confident and supported, especially newer nurses or those working in unfamiliar specialties. Time spent on mitigating second-guessing often leads to reduced anxiety levels and improved morale. This still means nurses are making critical calls for their patients, but after a long week of shifts, it is true: Technology can help alleviate any doubt when spent making clinical choices.

Making work–life balance a reality

This is a big one. And even more prescient in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help meter out nurses' workloads, many EHRs offer smart scheduling tools that consider workload intensity, shift history and staff preferences. These tools, often powered by AI, optimize shift assignments to minimize burnout risks and promote fairer distribution of workload. When nurses feel that their time and well-being are respected, it fosters a healthier work environment and supports a better work–life balance, which are two essential elements for positive mental health.

Emotional insight and support

While in nascent stages, some advanced EHR systems are beginning to incorporate sentiment analysis and wellness tracking. By monitoring indicators like task completion time, patient interaction logs or even typed note patterns, the system can flag signs of emotional distress or burnout. In doing so, it enables proactive support from leadership or mental health resources. Catching issues before they escalate is the best way to ensure all clinicians are protected.

Building a culture of care

When EHRs are designed with nurses' mental health at the center, they reinforce a culture that values care not just for patients, but also for providers. As we've touched on, AI doesn't replace human empathy—it helps protect it, by reducing the digital drudgery and information overload that can drain emotional energy.

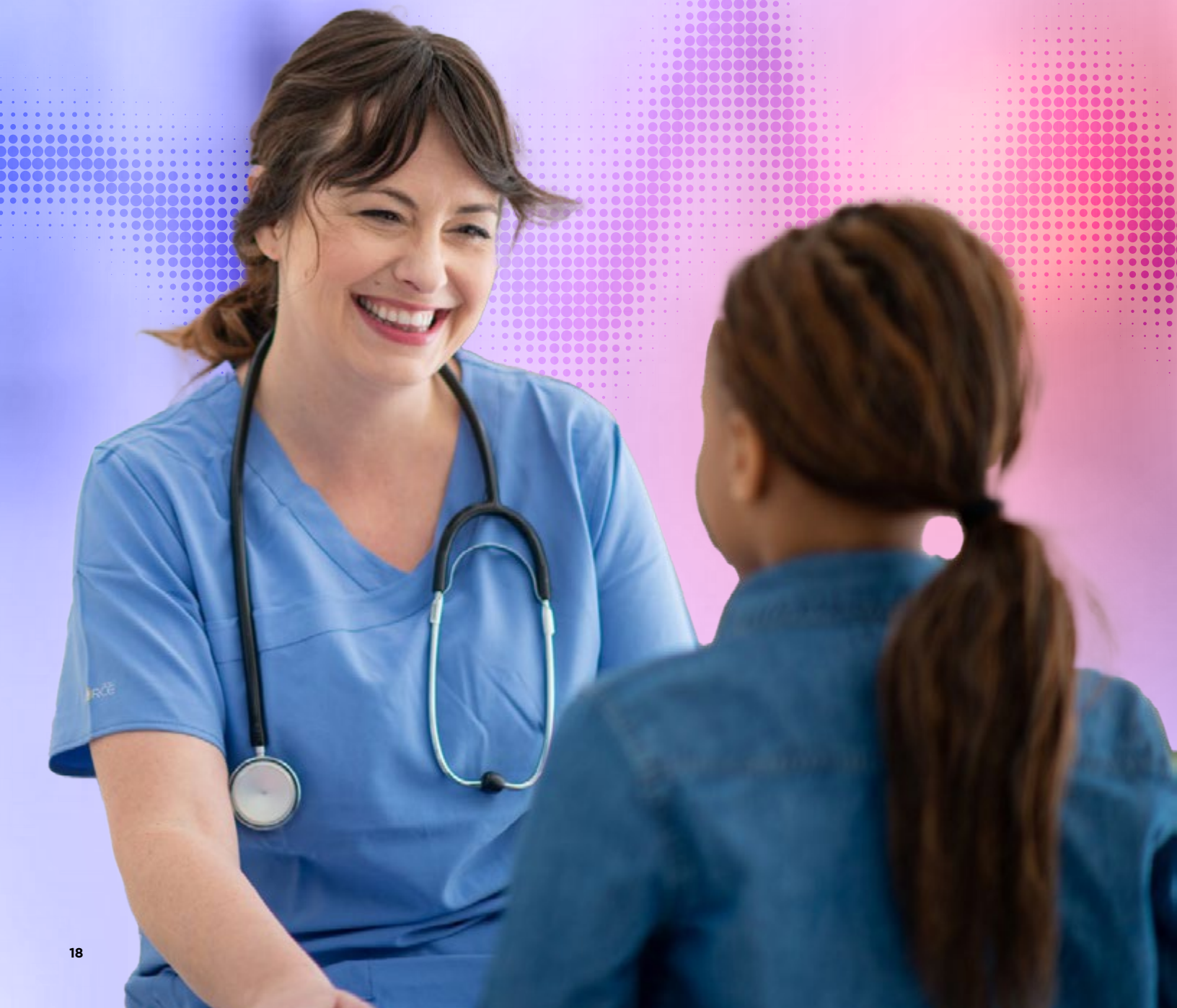
AI: The silent partner

Artificial intelligence in EHRs has the potential to do more than streamline hospital operations. It can become a silent partner in caring for the caregivers. By reducing workload, supporting clinical decisions, enabling better schedules and detecting emotional distress before it gets to be a bigger problem, AI can help nurses feel more empowered, less overwhelmed and better equipped to act on the compassion that drives their profession.

Read more articles like this on our Insights page.

Prioritizing patient–provider connections in a digital age

By: Dr. Bob Taylor, Chief Product Strategist, TouchWorks EHR



As anyone in the healthcare landscape would attest, the patient experience is universal and fundamentally deserving of respect and care. Seeking medical care is often a vulnerable experience, and feeling better is truly the only goal. Of course, the scope of requirements and regulations in healthcare is ever-spanning, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but must be kept in mind for anyone providing treatment. It's not simple to balance between administrative tasks and more human, connective care, but this endeavor is well worth pursuing.

Adopt a patient's perspective, for a moment. Imagine you're feeling unwell—maybe due to a fever, or cold—and getting to your direct primary care provider was a challenge itself due to your illness. Once you're there, your provider seems to be interacting with screens and devices more than with you. Of course you're glad they're documenting your symptoms, but even so, it stirs a feeling of wanting more face-to-face interaction to ensure you're being heard and that your doctor is homed in on you and your care.

A healthcare provider reading this understands the challenges of ensuring patients get the care—and attention—they need, while juggling a lot of administrative needs. And as a technology vendor ourselves, it is our responsibility to equip those providers with the tools they need to get it all done.

As technology develops, growing pains are expected

It is essential for healthcare organizations to accurately and comprehensively document patient interactions and carry out administrative tasks, but as that side of technology has developed (with no signs of slowing), a lack of human-first care can become a major barrier in patient care. At Altera Digital Health, it is our priority to equip organizations with the technology they need to ensure that patients remain at the center of their mission to provide excellent care for excellent outcomes. Our success is measured by how well our client users are performing, and patient satisfaction and outcomes are two areas that we can help them make great strides.

Humans caring for humans

In that vein, we've developed a solution using ambient listening technology, enabling providers with more facetime with their patients.

In collaboration with Medicomp, TouchWorks Note+ brings this concept to reality for providers, enabling better outcomes with a focus on human-to-human interaction. By transcribing and building accurate, structured clinical notes, TouchWorks Note+ helps reduce the amount of burden felt by clinicians from documentation, while improving note accuracy and patient satisfaction. By driving both quality care and increased patient satisfaction, with TouchWorks Note+, organizations can bring next-level care within reach.

Learn more about TouchWorks Note+.

Get to know our

Trailblazers

Dr. Bob Taylor

Chief Product Strategist for TouchWorks EHR

Can AI turn an EHR into a clinician's true partner?

In Episode 2 of of our AI Trailblazer series, we sit down with Dr. Taylor to hear to how AI can reduce administrative burden and streamline workflows for providers.

"As an internal medicine resident 25 years ago, I created my first clinical note authoring solution."

—Dr. Bob Taylor

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real outcomes.
with real heart.

Watch the full episode and meet all of our Altera Trailblazers.

Keeping our clients up and running

Downtime and upgrades sound familiar? Hendrick Health System took a different route. Instead, they partnered with Altera's Testing Center of Excellence (TCoE), for a smooth, stress-free go-live. Hendrick had a successful go-live with minimal pre-go live issues, security and clarity with no headache. By choosing TCoE, Hendrick skipped the chaos and embraced simplicity. No drama, just a clean patch release upgrade that worked.

Learn more about Hendrick Health System's partnership with Altera's Testing Center of Excellence in our client success story.

On the journey to the summit

Our clients' successes are at the heart of what we do. Holzer Health System was able to rely on the Paragon team to handle all the back-end work, so Holzer's clinicians and staff could focus on what matters most, without getting weighed down in the process. Having a reliable, efficient support team and project manager is crucial in keeping projects on track and on time, ensuring a smooth, successful system activation. Holzer experienced the impact of exactly that.

Learn how Holzer experienced meaningful collaboration with the Paragon team in our client success story.

Get to know our

Trailblazers

Nikhil Bhatia

VP of R&D for Paragon

Nikhil Bhatia on AI as a Force Multiplier in R&D

In Episode 4 of our AI Trailblazer series, Nikhil shares how AI is transforming not only what his team delivers—but how they collaborate, experiment and grow together.

"AI became an incredible force multiplier for us."

—Nikhil Bhatia

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